

Prosecutor in freeway killings hits jury with sight and sound

MAR 17 1993

■ Jurors hear 911 tape, see gruesome color photos during closing arguments

By Susan Marquez Owen
STAFF WRITER

OAKLAND — Using dramatic audio and visual props, a prosecutor played jurors a 911 tape of a freeway shooting victim's desperate pleas and showed large, gruesome color photos of men and women who had been shot to death.

Calling alleged freeway killers Charles Arnett Stevens and Richard James Clark "vicious, violent cowards," Deputy District Attorney Kenneth Burr made his closing arguments in the men's trial Tuesday by playing a police tape of the hysterical call of a man at whom Stevens allegedly fired shots.

"On the freeway, under the bridge!" the victim shouted to a police dispatcher. "He shot at me twice! It's a white — it's a white guy!"

Burr said the Alameda County Superior Court jury must not forget the anguish and terror Stevens and Clark allegedly spread through Oakland neighborhoods during the four-month murder spree in the summer of 1989.

The prosecutor turned to a display board and angrily ripped down a large sheet of paper covering photos of several victims. One woman had been shot through the eye and forehead. Another man was slumped over the steering wheel of his car with blood splattered across the windshield and seats.

"This fool down here with the

glasses," said Burr, pointing toward Stevens and holding up a rare Israeli-made .357-caliber semiautomatic pistol Stevens allegedly used in the killings. "What does he do? He smiles and pulls this puppy out. He smiles to disarm them and then he starts shooting."

Stevens is charged with four murders and six attempted murders on or near Interstate 580. Burr called the mile-and-a-half stretch of freeway, between Harrison Street and Grand Lake Boulevard, Stevens' "hunting territory."

Stevens, who allegedly pulled alongside commuters in his white Mazda RX-7 before opening fire, is also charged with the special circumstances of lying in wait and multiple murder. Convictions on those counts could send him to the gas chamber.

Clark is charged with one mur-

der, and faces 25 years to life in prison.

The victims included: Leslie Noyer, 29, whose body was found next to a stolen car in the 500 block of Chetwood Street; Laquan D. Sloan, 16, shot in the 700 block on 27th Street; Lori Rochon, who was found bleeding behind the wheel of her car near the freeway; and Raymond August, a 28-year-old mechanical engineer, killed near the 35th Avenue exit of the freeway.

Stevens' defense has been minimal, while Clark, who has changed his version of events several times, claims he had nothing to do with the killing of Noyer, his alleged victim.

Defense attorneys are expected to give their closing arguments within the next couple of days. The jury should begin deliberations by the end of the week.

'Freeway killers' trial opens

FEB 2 1993

By Susan Marquez Owen
STAFF WRITER

OAKLAND — Alleged "freeway killers" Charles Arnett Stevens and Richard James Clark Jr. are scheduled to begin what promises to be a highly charged murder trial today involving four killings and six attempted murders on or near Interstate 580.

The 4-month-long spate of killings and attempted killings terrorized the neighborhood between Harrison and Grand Lake just north of the freeway where most of the attacks occurred in 1989.

Stevens, 23, is charged with all four counts of murder and six

attempted murders.

He could face the death penalty if he is convicted. Clark, who is charged with one count of murder, could face life in prison.

Stevens allegedly shot Raymond August near the 35th Avenue exit on July 27, 1989. He is also charged with killing Lori Rochon, who was shot on the freeway on July 6, and 16-year-old Laquan D. Sloan in the 700 block of 27th St. on June 8.

Both are accused of murdering Leslie Noyer, whose body was found next to a stolen car in the 500 block of Chetwood Street on April 3.

Both men have pleaded innocent to all charges.

Killing

FEB 3 1993

horrors unfold

■ Trial opens for suspected 'freeway killers' in Oakland

By Susan Marquez Owen
STAFF WRITER

OAKLAND — As the "freeway killers" trial opened Tuesday, an Alameda County prosecutor Tuesday said Charles Arnett Stevens and Richard James Clark Jr. shot complete strangers for fun in a four-month murder spree along Interstate 580.

As friends and family of victims sobbed in the courtroom, Deputy District Attorney Ken Burr showed several gruesome photos of some of the young men and women who were allegedly shot to death by the two men.

Walking to the end of a courtroom table where the diminutive Stevens, 23, sat scribbling on a note pad, Burr told the seven-woman, five-man jury that Stevens did not kill people for profit or out of hatred or to eliminate witnesses.

"This young man with the nice tie and white shirt . . . killed because he enjoyed it," Burr said. "He is a recreational killer."

Stevens is charged with four counts of murder and six counts of attempted murder, plus the special circumstances of lying in wait and multiple murder, which carry the death penalty upon conviction.

Clark, 24, who is charged with one count of murder, faces 25 years to life in prison.

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Burr described in wrenching detail the killing of 29-year-old Leslie Noyer, whose body was found next to a stolen car in the 500 block of Chetwood Street on April 3.

Burr said Clark used a powerful and rare Desert Eagle .357-magnum semiautomatic pistol and hollow-tip bullets to shoot Noyer repeatedly in the head and chest after she approached Clark's car to speak to him.

Stevens witnessed and encouraged Noyer's killing, and later used the same weapon to stalk and kill three others that summer, Burr said.

The victims included: Raymond August, a 28-year-old mechanical engineer, killed near the 35th Avenue exit of the freeway on July 27; Lori Rochon, who was found July 6 bleeding behind the wheel of her car near I-580; and 16-year-old Laquan D. Sloan, shot June 8 in the 700 block of 27th Street.

The four-month-long spate of killings and attempted killings terrorized the neighborhood between Harrison and Grand Lake just north of the freeway where most of the attacks occurred.

Burr said Stevens' fatal flaw was that he liked not only to kill but to watch the ensuing mayhem: "He wanted to see the horror and confusion and terror he had struck."

Confession links Zambrano, killer

APR 17, 1993

■ Deputy says he heard convicted killer vow revenge

By Danielle Cass
STAFF WRITER

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OAKLAND — Two high-profile murder cases were woven together Tuesday when a sheriff's deputy said he overheard convicted freeway killer Charles Stevens tell Enrique Zambrano, a former Berkeley official charged with decapitating his friend, that he wanted to kill his co-defendant for "snitching."

Alameda County Sheriff's Deputy Tim Durbin will testify today in Superior Court that he was driving Stevens and Zambrano to the courthouse on March 18 when he heard Stevens tell Zambrano he wanted to kill Richard Clark for snitching on him five times.

Clark's confessions helped convict Stevens of four counts of murder committed during a random shooting spree on Interstate 580 in 1989.

Deputy District Attorney Ken Burr said the deputy heard Stevens say "I'm going to kill that



A defense attorney for Enrique Zambrano attacks Zambrano's ex-lover's testimony /B-2

mother. . . even if I did make him do some of those things."

The alleged conversation came to light during the first day of Stevens' penalty phase. The jury that convicted the 23-year-old Oakland man last week of the murders and six attempted murders must now decide whether he should be executed or sent to prison for life without parole.

Stevens terrorized central Oakland during a four-month shooting spree along Interstate 580 in 1989 in which he pulled alongside drivers, waved to get their attention, then fired at them with a high-powered pistol.

Zambrano, 49, is on trial across the hall for allegedly murdering Luis Reyna, a fellow

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Death sought for slayer

APR 20 1993

■ Convicted freeway killer should get death penalty, DA argues

By Susan Marquez Owen
STAFF WRITER

While the random murders committed by freeway killer Charles Arnet Stevens might seem to be the work of an insane man, a prosecutor urged a jury Monday to consider him sane and sentence him to death.

Senior Deputy District Attorney Ken Burr told a jury Monday that Stevens should be held fully

accountable for his crimes, despite defense attorneys' claims that Stevens has mental problems. The defense is expected to argue those mental problems warrant the sparing of Stevens' life.

Stevens was convicted last month of four counts of murder and six counts of attempted murder for gunning down motorists on or near Interstate 580 in the summer of 1989. He also was convicted of lying in wait and multiple murder. He is now on trial for his life in Alameda County Superior Court, where a jury must decide whether to rec-

ommend death, or life in prison without possibility of parole.

Pointing out that doctors admit there is nothing "medically" wrong with Stevens, Burr said it doesn't matter if the crimes make no sense to the jury.

"They made sense to him," Burr said. "These killings gave him (Stevens) a sense of power because at night he controlled a corridor of the 580 freeway," Burr said. "He terrorized people; he held them in his grip."

Defense attorneys are expected to begin their arguments today.

Oakland's freeway killer is sent to Death Row

SAT JUL 31 1993

By Danielle Cass
STAFF WRITER

Charles Arnett Stevens, the notorious freeway killer who terrorized central Oakland by chasing down and killing motorists on Interstate 580, must be put to death, a Superior Court judge ruled Friday.

"The court finds the murders were vicious and pitiless and exhibited the highest degree of cruelty and callousness," Judge William McGuinness said, marking the end of a tragedy that took the lives of four people and emotionally scarred countless others.

Stevens was convicted in March by an Alameda County Superior Court jury of four murders and six attempted murders, all committed during the summer of 1989 along a mile-and-a-half stretch of Interstate 580 that prosecutors referred to as Stevens' "hunting ground."

The same jury recommended the death sentence after a penalty phase hearing.

Stevens, dressed in lavender jail-issue coveralls, sat stonefaced throughout Friday's proceedings. He smirked only once at the end.

During his shooting spree in 1989, he would wave at freeway drivers and then fire at them with a high-powered Desert Eagle pistol. He kept a tally sheet in his bedroom of each killing and sometimes perched near the scene to watch the ambulances.

Karen Adams, whose sister Lori Rochon was killed by Stevens on July 6, 1989, cried quietly as Judge McGuinness read his decision. William August, whose son Raymond was killed on the 35th Avenue exit on July 27, 1989, wiped tears from his face and clutched his wife's hand.

"If anybody deserves to die in the gas chamber, he does," Adams said outside the courtroom. "I will definitely be there to see him take his last breath, which is something he didn't give me a chance to do with my sister."

Before reading the final sentence, McGuinness denied a motion by Stevens' attorneys, Alex Selvin and Michael Berger, that Stevens be given a new trial because Deputy District Attorney Ken Burr allegedly kept African Americans off the jury.

"I find that personally insulting and I take that as a serious attack on my professional integrity," Burr told the judge in court. "This defendant is an equal-opportunity killer."

There was one African American on the jury and one among the alternates.

Burr, who said Stevens' execution could happen within five years after the typical series of Supreme Court appeals, was pleased with the final sentence.

"The death penalty was designed for a someone like him," Burr said outside the courtroom. "He's purely a recreational killer."



NICK LAMMERS — Staff

Attorney Alex Selvin, left, flanks a smiling Charles Stevens, the notorious freeway killer who was sentenced to death Friday.

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an alleged target

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Berkeley waterfront commissioner, and beating a Berkeley couple in their home. Stevens and Zambrano were riding from North County jail to the courthouse in a van when the alleged conversation occurred.

In calling for the death penalty for Stevens, Burr mentioned the irony that this weekend marks the fourth anniversary of the beginning of the murder spree.

Defense attorney Michael Ber-

ger said Stevens suffers from a developmental disorder, watched his mother drink herself to death and deserves life in prison. Family and friends of the victims gasped and shifted noisily in their chairs in response to Berger's statements.

William August, whose son Raymond was killed on the 35th Avenue exit on July 27, 1989, said Stevens deserves the death penalty.

"He's like an animal, except animals kill for food. He had no reason to kill those people. He didn't know any of them," William August said.